

IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A design knowledge information capture tool comprising:

a storage means for storing design knowledge information generated or acquired during progress of a first design project, wherein the design knowledge information extends beyond product design information and includes information on evolution of a first design project and causal dependencies between items of said design knowledge, said storage means comprising a plurality of files, each file having a predefined knowledge structure for including a list of issues to be addressed;

an input means for allowing a user to input information into the storage means;
and

a presentation means for presenting a file template of each of said plurality of files to the user to allow the information to be input by the user in said predefined knowledge structure, wherein said presentation means presents each said structure as an array of nodes, each node representing an item of said design knowledge and each node appears only once in each of said plurality of files, wherein a dependency between items of said design knowledge is represented by a directed link between selected nodes, wherein said directed link is bi-directional to permit a user to traverse the link in either direction, and wherein said selected nodes represent items of design knowledge stored in different files.

2. (Original) A tool according to claim 1 wherein the storage means comprises an interactive graph editor.

3. (Canceled).

4. (Previously Presented) A tool as claimed in claim 1 wherein, in use, a user is prompted by the knowledge structure, to input at least one possible answer to at least one of said issues, the at least one possible answer being stored as one of the, or each, piece of information at the label of the node.
5. (Original) A tool as claimed in claim 4 wherein the knowledge structure prompts the user to input at least one argument that supports or refutes the possible answer, the at least one argument being stored as one of the, or each, piece of information at the label of the node.
6. (Original) A tool as claimed in claim 5 wherein the at least one argument is classified as a supporting or a refuting argument.
7. (Canceled).
8. (Previously Presented) A tool as claimed in claim 5 wherein said at least one argument is classified as a valid or an invalid argument.
9. (Canceled).
10. (Previously Presented) A tool as claimed in claim 4 wherein the at least one answer is classified as an open, an accepted or rejected answer.
- 11.-16. (Canceled).

17. (Previously Presented) A tool as claimed in claim 1 wherein the, or each, node can be linked to an additional node on the same file.

18. (Previously Presented) A tool as claimed in claim 1, wherein a sub-issue to at least one predefined issue can be identified and input into the storage means.

19. (Original) A tool as claimed in claim 18 wherein a user is prompted to input at least one possible answer to the sub-issue.

20.-21.(Canceled).

22. (Previously Presented) A tool according to claim 1, having a processing means to identify at least one predefined issue addressed on a first design project, which issue is encountered on a subsequent design project.

23.-32. (Canceled)

33. (Currently Amended) A method, comprising:

capturing design knowledge information wherein the information extends beyond product design information and includes information on evolution of a first design project and causal dependencies between items of design knowledge

storing the information generated or acquired during progress of a first design project in a storage means, said storage means comprising a plurality of files, each file having a predefined knowledge structure, for including a list of issues to be addressed;

selecting one of said files and presenting a file template of each of said plurality of files to the user to allow the information to be input by the user in said predefined knowledge structure, each structure being presented as an array of nodes, each node representing an item of said design knowledge and each node appears only once in each of said plurality of files, wherein a dependency between items of said design knowledge is represented by a directed link between selected nodes, wherein said directed link is a bi-directional link to permit a user to traverse the link in either direction, and wherein said selected nodes represent items of design knowledge stored in different files, and inputting information into said one of said files.

34.-40. (Canceled).

41. (Previously Presented) A computer programmed to capture design knowledge information, wherein the design knowledge information is generated or acquired during progress of a first design project, the information extending beyond product design information and including information on evolution of the first design project and causal dependencies, according to the method described in claim 33.

42.-46. (Canceled).

47. (Currently Amended) A computer readable storage medium on which is stored computer executable instructions which when executed by a computer processor performs the method of claim 4133.

48. (Previously Presented) A computer system including a computer readable storage medium, said computer configured to capture and reuse a design rationale of a first project, the design rationale containing data on at least one design issue according to the method of claim 33.

49. (Canceled).

50. (Previously Presented) A computer system including a computer readable storage medium, said computer configured to capture design knowledge information, the design knowledge information being generated or acquired during progress of a first design project wherein stored information extends beyond project design information and includes information on evolution of the first design project and causal dependencies, according to the method of claim 33.

51.-54. (Canceled).

55. (New) A method, comprising:

storing design knowledge information generated or acquired during progress of a first design project in a computer, the computer having more than one file, each file having a predefined knowledge structure;

selecting one of the files and presenting a file template of each of the files to allow the design knowledge information to be inputted in the predefined knowledge structure, each structure being presented as an array of nodes, wherein each node appears only once in each of the files; and

creating a tunnel link between at least two nodes by identifying an item of design knowledge in the first design project and a subsequent design project, wherein the at least two nodes are located in different files.

56. (New) The method of claim 55, wherein the tunnel link represents a causal dependency between the at least two nodes.

57. (New) The method of claim 55, wherein the tunnel link is created automatically by the computer.